

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, January 25, 2007

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

State juvenile justice cuts will hit local facilities

Trims at Maxey; Arbor Heights halfway house to close

Thursday, January 25, 2007

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT

News Staff Reporter

State budget cuts will close a juvenile offender halfway house in Ann Arbor and reduce the number of high-security youths and workers at Maxey Boys Training School in Green Oak Township.

The changes are expected to save the state \$2.2 million at Maxey and \$2.3 million at Arbor Heights, said state Department of Human Services spokeswoman Karen Stock. Those total 14.8 percent of all costs for juvenile justice facilities, Stock said.

Stock said 68 staffers will be affected by the cuts, but some will be able to move to other facilities around the state by bumping lower-seniority workers. It was not clear how many state employees will lose their jobs.

Maxey holds youths who have committed the most serious felonies, those with chronic mental health and social development issues, those who committed sex offenses and those who are too aggressive for other facilities, said Stock. It is the only state-run, maximum-security facility for youth in Michigan that treats those with mental illness.

Stock said the population at Maxey will be reduced from 180 to 150, and the work force at Maxey will be reduced by 34 staffers, leaving 268.

In a letter to family court judges and court administrators, DHS reported that "national standards recommend a maximum of 150 residents, and national best practice models show that training schools are often more effective and provide higher quality programs at that capacity."

Spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said the state expects the Maxey population to drop naturally by Feb. 24, the date on which the changes are scheduled to take place.

The 20 youths housed at Arbor Heights in Ann Arbor will be moved.

She said the cost for a youth at Maxey is \$420 per day, versus \$240 per day at a private facility. Private facilities are not required to provide education programs, Stock said. Those youth get educational services through the local school districts or intermediate school districts.

Susan Oppat can be reached at soppat@annarbornews.com or at 734-482-1166.

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Prosecutors, attorney say state reneging on promises

Of The Oakland Press

Oakland County prosecutors have accused state officials of backing off from promises made about Nathaniel Abraham's postrehabilitation, and they're angry at being accused of speaking incorrectly about the subject.

Abraham's attorney, Daniel Bagdade, said Abraham was promised assistance.

Bagdade said he believes the state is backing away from its promises, though he remains unsure of what assistance is available. He said he cannot get a straight answer from the bureaucracy.

"All the secondhand answers I have gotten are that the state is backing off," Bagdade said.

State Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, is looking into the situation, citing constituent concerns over what the state may be providing to a man who was the youngest person charged with murder in Michigan.

Abraham was 11 when he killed 18-year-old Ronnie Greene Jr. in Pontiac. He was charged as an adult with murder but sentenced as a juvenile. He was released from custody last week.

Bagdade said Abraham was assured he would receive those services but learned on Tuesday night that they may not be provided.

"He was very upset when he talked to me about that," Bagdade said. "He feels like they are going back on their word. It's just so unfair because he is starting out so far behind everyone else."

Abraham is waiting to start a job in maintenance for a manufacturing facility. The lawyer said Abraham, who now lives in Bay City, saved a few thousand dollars while working from a halfway house.

"He has some money to sustain himself for the short term," Bagdade said. "He is going to be working, and he is going to be doing the very best he can to make ends meet, just like so many people in our society. He'll find a job. He's very industrious and very hard-working."

When Abraham, now 21, was released Jan. 18 from state custody, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley described services the state would provide him.

These included paying for two years of housing and paying for college until he is 25, Carley said she was told. She said she was told the department had placed him in a Foster Care Demonstration Project, a pilot program designed to help Wayne County foster children aging out of the system at 18. Carley said the plan was outlined in a Jan. 8 meeting.

Officials from the Department of Human Services - who oversaw Abraham's rehabilitation - later denied that any plan had been settled.

There may have been a misunderstanding, said Karen Stock, director of communications for the Department of Human Services. She said this week that the demonstration project was never considered for Abraham.

Michigan Report

January 24, 2007

MEMO TO LAWMAKERS HIGHLIGHTS **STATE INVOLVEMENT IN ABRAHAM CASE**

The Department of Human Services has been fielding calls from the public on the recent release of Nathaniel Abraham, the youngest person to be convicted on adult murder charges, over media reports that the state is paying for his housing and college tuition now that he's a free man. The inquiries have also prompted the department to send a memo out to all state lawmakers going over what involvement the state has had on Mr. Abraham's behalf in case their constituents bring up the issue.

The memo, given to Gongwer News Service, states that Mr. Abraham is not being given a spot in any housing program or housing pilot and that DHS is in ongoing discussions with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority on a potential housing pilot project, but that it wouldn't be ready, if approved, for months.

"The state has not provided housing assistance to Nathaniel Abraham that was meant to help foster children," the memo states.

It goes onto say that under the Michigan Rehabilitation Services, juvenile justice youths are referred to the program six months before they exit the system.

"Even though they have been referred, individuals still must be assessed by MRS counselors to determine eligibility of services," it states, adding that all MRS questions should be directed to the MRS.

But the state has helped Mr. Abraham find an apartment and a potential job and "familiarized him with other services for which he may apply as a Michigan citizen."

In confronting any questions about why Mr. Abraham is being helped, the memo states, "When a youth leaves the juvenile justice system, the youth's stability and success is important not only for youth, but for the safety of the community. That is why DHS-BJJ helps youths by identifying what supports may be available for them."

A spokesperson for DHS said that there was no way to determine how many calls from the public the department has received because they come into different centers.

"Certainly, we have heard from the public," said spokesperson Maureen Sorbet.

Instead, Stock said, there was discussion of possibly giving him assistance in a pilot program through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. She said she didn't have details.

Prosecutors are convinced that this lack of details is back-pedaling. "I don't think it's productive for me to respond to that (accusation of backpedaling)," Stock said.

Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca says his office and Carley have been attacked unfairly because of public reaction.

"Ever since DHS' intentions have been publicly exposed, they have made every effort to reconstruct history," Gorcyca said Wednesday from northern Michigan, where he is attending a prosecutors conference.

"We are immensely disgruntled that they have intentionally attempted to cast aspersions onto my office," he said. "There was such a huge public outcry, first that they have already expended over a million dollars to rehabilitate Nate, now they are rewarding him with free housing, education and other services. That is the perception."

Bagdade said he cannot recall exact details from the Jan. 8 meeting, but says he left believing there was a firm promise.

"When I walked out of there, I felt it was a done deal," Bagdade said Wednesday. "They definitely provided us with the details of an after-care program."

Bagdade said Carley took "copious notes" as she sat next to him, and Carley provided her notes to The Oakland Press. In them, she noted that Abraham would typically be eligible for food stamps and emergency services but the Foster Care Demonstration Project would be applied.

After Carley reported this during the final review hearing before Oakland County Probate Judge Eugene Moore last week, no one from the Department of Human Services countered her explanation.

The grant-funded demonstration project helps young people in Detroit and Highland Park who are aging out of foster care with life skills training, job training and job placement.

It runs from the Michigan Works! Association office in Highland Park.

The day after the hearing, state officials said nothing regarding services was final.

"You have a young man who spent his entire childhood, almost 10 full years, locked up in a juvenile facility, maximum security, which amounts to prison. He is being thrust out into society and is being told, 'Have a nice life.' Even adult state prisoners, when they are released, have the parole system to fall back on."

But Bagdade said he remains optimistic that Abraham will succeed.

Most frustrating, Bagdade said, is not knowing what the answer is.

"The state, apparently, just isn't willing to offer him any help," he said. "I don't know what to think of it. When you are dealing with the bureaucracy, it is always one hand not knowing what the other is doing and the buck being passed from table to table and just denial after denial."

That is what prompted Law's interest. After numerous calls from constituents, Law, a former assistant Oakland County prosecutor, made some inquiries.

"I don't have an answer yet," Law said. "We do have calls out there. Obviously, I wasn't in that meeting. I'm interested as a legislator in what was promised and why."

Staff writer Ann Zaniewski contributed to this report.

Port Huron Times Herald

January 24, 2007

Talk to me:

Abraham isn't getting state allowance

Resident from Port Huron: "Regarding Nathaniel Abraham: What is the state of Michigan thinking in giving a convicted murderer a furnished apartment and paying for four years of schooling for him? Don't you think there are kids out there who are needy, who could use a helping hand and a four year education? Where does a convicted murderer get off by getting these benefits?"

Several news media outlet have retracted the report. State officials explicitly deny taxpayers are paying for Abraham's apartment or college. The only thing he is receiving from the state is food stamps because he qualifies for them.



Wed, Jan 24, 2007 at 6:03 PM

Richard Burr

Abraham case: Liberals forget Michigan sees red

If the brouhaha over last year's attempted elimination of "America" from Michigan's high school social studies classrooms is any guide, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's human services officials were going to give released convicted murderer **Nathaniel Abraham state-subsidized rent and tuition**, but backtracked after the public backlash.

When former Republican State Board of Education member Michael Warren wrote a Detroit News commentary last year saying the state's social studies consultant was telling educators not to utter "America" in history classrooms for fear of practicing some kind of chauvinism, **Gov. Jennifer Granholm's handpicked state superintendent of public instruction** said he was incorrect. State officials questioned Warren's credibility.

Then a **Detroit News editorial** cited e-mails from the consultant criticizing the use of America as "ethnocentric" and bragging about how America had been eliminated from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program's high school social studies test for 10 years. In the face of mounting public criticism, the Michigan Department of Education backtracked and conducted an investigation of the MEAP tests.

Something similar seems to be happening with the Abraham case. Both the Oakland County prosecutor's representatives and Abraham's attorney say there was a subsidy deal on the table. State Department of Human Services officials failed to contradict the description of the services last week when they were revealed in court.

But once The Detroit News brought the details to light, the Department of Human Services couldn't deny the deal fast enough. Letter writers inundated The Detroit News with condemnations of the supposedly mythical aid package.

Let this be a reminder: Michigan may now lean Democratic blue in presidential and gubernatorial elections, but it remains a culturally conservative red state. Liberal bureaucrats and appointees ignore this at their peril.



Teen faces rape charge

Thursday, January 25, 2007

By Steven Hepker

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Jackson police plan to charge a Jackson teen with the Nov. 9 gunpoint rape of a 16-year-old girl in an old garage near Loomis Park.

Investigators said a long trail led them to the Jackson County Youth Home, where the 16-year-old suspect is being held on unrelated charges.

Prosecutors are expected to file charges as early as today.

They could include first-degree criminal sexual conduct and felony firearms.

The victim and three male friends, all 16, were in the park at about 8:45 p.m. that day when they were "approached by the suspect stating he was going to rob them," Deputy Chief Matt Heins said.

The man rifled through the girl's purse and ordered the four to walk to an old garage on Edgewood Street.

"Upon entering the garage he made the boys lie face down on the ground and proceeded to assault the 16-year-old victim," Heins said in a statement. He released the four after an hour.

It was nearly a week before police released information on the attack. Police said they had a difficult time trying to piece together an accurate account.

Police reported the suspect forced the boys to take off their shoes and lie face down on the floor, then forced the girl to strip, raping her while holding a small pistol.

The victims told police the suspect made two two-way pages on his Nextel cell phone during the assault. In one conversation he said, "I love you, baby. I'll be home soon."

In another conversation, he bragged that he "was robbing four kids right now, and I'll get back with you."

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Published January 25, 2007

Exhibit spotlights foster children

Lansing State Journal

The Michigan Heart Gallery is aptly named: It tugs the heartstrings.

The 2007 gallery - which debuted at the Capitol on Wednesday - features photos by professional photographers of Michigan children who are in foster care waiting to be adopted.

The gallery is a collaboration between the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, the Adoptive Family Support Network and the Michigan Department of Human Services.



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
At the Capitol: Jan Berry (left) and Kim Frisch, both from the Michigan Department of Human Services, look over some of the portraits of children Wednesday at the Michigan Heart Gallery 2007 exhibit at the Capitol in Lansing. The portraits, taken by professional photographers, are of Michigan foster children who are waiting to be adopted.

The kids featured in the gallery are among 300 the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is working to place.

Most of them are older than 10; some have lived through abuse and neglect or have disabilities.

Some of the children featured in the 42 photos of the exhibit have been waiting for years to be adopted.

"Some of these kids are 14 or 15 years old," said Regina Funkhouser, Heart Gallery coordinator.

"They are going to age out of the system when they're 18, and then they're on their own for the rest of their lives."

The Heart Gallery will be on display through Feb. 3 at Lansing Community College's West Campus, 5708 Cornerstone Drive.

Exhibit hours are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Learn more about the effort at miheart.org.

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Michigan Heart Gallery 2007

Kathleen Lavey, Lansing State Journal

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The gallery is a collaboration between the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, the Adoptive Family Support Network and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The kids featured in the gallery are among more than 4,000 in Michigan who do not have families of their own. Many of them are older children who have lived with abuse or neglect, have medical issues or are in need of special help.

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Learn more about the effort at miheart.org.



Related Links

- MORE.org - the official website of the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange
- LSJ website

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ClickOnDetroit.com

Mother Accused Of Killing Son, Injuring Daughter

POSTED: 4:34 pm EST January 24, 2007

UPDATED: 6:52 pm EST January 24, 2007

DETROIT -- Detroit police are investigating the death of a 16-month old boy and injuries to his twin sister.

Francina Shepard, the mother of the twins, is in police custody at the Southwest Public Safety Center.

Neighbors said they watched police carry out the son in a body bag Tuesday and rushed his twin sister to the hospital.

Shepard has been arrested and is awaiting arraignment on assault charges and possibly murder charges.

Local 4 has learned Shepard has three other children. The state has removed those children from her care.

Stay with Local 4 and ClickOnDetroit.com for the very latest developments.

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RELATED TO STORY



Video: Mother Accused Of Killing Son, Injuring Daughter 1/24/07

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Mom pleads not guilty to child abuse

Updated: Jan 24, 2007 04:40 PM EST

GRAND RAPIDS - Elizabeth Dillon pled not guilty at her arraignment Wednesday on child abuse charges stemming from an incident where her children were left unattended in a car for hours.

In Cascade District Court, she heard the charges brought against her from an incident earlier this month.

Lowell police said on January 9, the 28-year old Sand Lake mother parked her full size, crew-cab pickup on the bridge in downtown Lowell that straddles the Flat River. She's accused of leaving her twin six-year old boys and 22-month old son inside and went across the street to the Circle JF Saddlery.

She's facing up to four years in prison if she is convicted on all three charges of second-degree child abuse.

24 Hour News 8 will continue to follow this story as it develops.

Previous story from 24 Hour News 8:

[Kids left in car; mom arrested](#)



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Mom pleads not guilty

Thursday, January 25, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS TOWNSHIP -- A 28-year-old Sand Lake woman, accused of leaving her three children in a car for more than three hours while she shopped for a saddle, pleaded not guilty to felony charges Wednesday. Elizabeth Dillon said little during the short hearing before District Judge Sara Smolenski and rushed out the front doors of the Grand Rapids Township court building. After entering her plea, she was told she would continue to remain free on bond and would keep custody of the twin 6-year-olds and 22-month-old boys police say she left in her car on Jan. 9 as she shopped for a saddle at a Lowell store. She will return to court Feb. 12 to determine whether she will be tried on child-abuse charges.

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January 25, 2007

New number for county abuse cases

Wayne County now offers a dedicated “1-800” number for suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

County residents can call 1 (800) 716-2234 to report suspicion of abuse or neglect, said Jerome Rutland, director of Wayne County Department of Human Services.

Rutland said a rise in the number of child abuse complaints prompted the special number, which aims to speed up the reporting process.

“We have seen an increase,” said Rutland, who added that the public, along with mandated reporters, are more aware of abuse situations.

When a person calls the number, they speak to a worker in the Information and Referral Unit, who asks a series of questions to determine the validity of the complaint. If the unit determines the call to be valid, it is referred to a district office for investigation.

There are certain cases in which the number should not be used, however.

“It’s not a general information number,” said Rutland. Emergencies should always be directed to 911, he said. Matters related to foster care, child placement, adoptions or assistance should be directed to the regular contact persons for those programs.

Rutland said the number comes as a new phone system is being installed, which will further help his department to process calls more efficiently.

For more information, visit <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>

<http://www.journalgroup.com/index.php?id=2830>

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Child kidnappings usually not done by strangers

Thursday, January 25, 2007

By Emily Monacelli

Special to the Gazette

While national news stories about two kidnapped Missouri boys have probably played on parents' worst fears for their own children, experts say the chances of children being kidnapped by strangers are small.

The Missouri boys were found Jan. 12 in the apartment of a man they hadn't known before who allegedly kidnapped them. One boy had been held for four days, the other for four years.

But statistics indicate that such a case is unlikely.

More than 200,000 children were abducted by family members and more than 58,000 children were abducted by strangers or acquaintances in 1999 in the United States, according to the National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children, a report published in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The numbers in Kalamazoo County mirror the national statistics, said Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department Detective Sgt. Larry Downey.

"Parental-type kidnapping" occurs more frequently than kidnapping by a stranger, he said.

"It's been several years since we've had an actual kidnapping that I'm aware of," Downey said.

Kidnapping makes up less than 2 percent of all violent crime against juveniles reported to police, according to a 1997 federal government study, and a quarter of all reported kidnappings are committed by strangers.

Once a child is reported missing, local law enforcement must issue a statewide Amber Alert within three hours, Downey said.

"That's the main thing, just to start documenting," he said. "If someone comes across that person, there will be a trail and a point of contact."

Fear of threats

A child who has been kidnapped might stay with his or her abductor for years, as in the case of Shawn Hornbeck, who spent four years with his alleged kidnapper in Missouri.

The child might stay because the abductor makes threats against the child's family or threatens to harm the child if he or she runs away, said Patricia Mazzello, a licensed marriage and family therapist in private practice in Kalamazoo.

"There's a defense mechanism psychologically called identification with the aggressor," Mazzello said. "It has to be a brainwashing sort of thing where someone has to have very ambivalent feelings and thoughts about succumbing to feeling comfortable with the aggressor as a self-protective device."

An elementary-school-age child or a child who tends to feel hopeless and helpless might be particularly vulnerable to kidnapping, she said.

A person who has been kidnapped and recovered may deal with a great amount of guilt and post-traumatic

stress disorder, so it is imperative for that person to seek professional counseling, said Ann Crabb, program director at Family and Children Services' Counseling Center in Kalamazoo.

``There's varying degrees of trauma that they experience," Crabb said. ``The biggest thing would be the loss of a sense of safety. I can't even imagine how it would come back."

When counseling a person who has experienced such trauma, Crabb said, she reminds him or her to look at the situation realistically, saying: ``You were a child. What could you have done?"

Parents who have had a child abducted and recovered may feel helpless and think they are not able to give their children what they want, Crabb said.

``It's so hard because they're walking on eggshells," she said.

Preventive action

To prevent kidnapping, Mazzello emphasizes that parents should know where their children are and who they are with and warn them about potential situations in which a stranger may try to take them.

``It's really important to get to know the parents of the (children's) friends and to, as much as possible, have activities paired up so they aren't going off alone," she said.

Parents also should think twice about leaving their children in a car while running into a post office, gas station or other site, Mazzello said.

``Now, in the winter, parents may use the heater and leave the car running, but is that safe?" she said.

The Vanished Children's Alliance, based in California, also offers tips for keeping children safe. Among them are teaching children to ask permission before going anywhere with anyone and teaching children to yell and draw attention if they sense danger.

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Muskegon Chronicle

Attorney 'dumbfounded' at teacher's porn charge

Thursday, January 25, 2007

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

In the poorest school district in the state, teachers frequently buy coats and shoes for their students and sometimes treat them to special events.

But Baldwin Superintendent Randy Howes said once he learned a student allegedly was sharing a bedroom with veteran teacher Sidney Clute, the district put Clute on administrative leave.

Now, Clute faces a felony charge for allegedly taking photographs of a 14-year-old boy without his knowledge, and a misdemeanor child pornography charge. If convicted, Clute faces up to two years in prison.

Yet Clute's defense attorney, former Lake County Prosecutor David Woodruff, claims authorities do not have a strong case.

"What they have for (felony) evidence is a picture of the young man sleeping with underwear and a pair of shorts on. As a former prosecutor, I'm really kind of dumbfounded," Woodruff said this week.

Calls to the current Lake County prosecutor, Michael Riley, were not returned.

Clute, 59, is a computer science teacher for the high school. He also served as an assistant coach for basketball and football, and as a music teacher in his 14 years with the district.

He had a history of befriending male teens at school and giving them special privileges, Woodruff said. In 2005, he took two brothers on a Caribbean cruise with parental permission.

Last year, he took under his wing a 14-year old boy who was having trouble in school. The boy went from failing to making the honor roll, Woodruff said.

The teen slept three nights a week at Clute's home with parental permission, attended University of Michigan football games with the teacher, and went to the Rose Bowl in California with the teacher, Clute's attorney said.

Earlier this month, the boy moved into the teacher's home, where they shared a bedroom with separate beds, Woodruff said.

Clute reportedly spoke of the living arrangements in school, prompting Child Protective Services to get involved. Police investigated, leading to Clute's arraignment last Friday. A probable cause hearing is set for Jan. 29.

In requesting a search warrant, a detective wrote that from his experience, Clute's alleged behavior was that of a pedophile grooming a victim.

But Woodruff claims his client is the victim.

"All of a sudden, someone decides 'We don't like this.' This young man went from almost failing to being on the honor roll. That is typically not what happens to someone being victimized. The first sign of a problem is reduction in grades," Woodruff said.

The attorney said police did not find evidence of pornography on Clute's home computer, and school officials said nothing was found on the district computer. The child porn charge comes from evidence of male genitalia being photographed, Woodruff said. Clute denies knowledge of this.

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Preventing dog bites

A Newberry man whose 3-year-old daughter was mauled by a Rottweiler dog while he slept has pleaded guilty to a second-degree child abuse charge in Luce County Circuit Court.

Corey Wass, 27, will be sentenced on March 20. The felony is punishable by a minimum of four months and a maximum of four years incarceration.

The incident resulting in 3-year-old Iris Wass' injuries occurred on the afternoon of Jan. 4, when she was dropped off at Corey Wass' mother's home. The girl was there on a pre-arranged parental visitation with her father.

Police said that while Corey Wass was asleep inside the house, Iris got through two back doors and outside to an area where three dogs were tied up.

The young girl apparently got tangled in a chain that was holding a 120-pound female Rottweiler owned by Corey Wass' mother's boyfriend, police said.

Luce County Sheriff Kevin Erickson said deputies think that once the chain got tangled up, the dog panicked and started scratching Iris.

The girl's clothing was scratched off her and she was found unconscious with the dog chain around her neck and body, police said.

The young girl was suffering from multiple dog bites, cuts and abrasions over 95 percent of her body. At least two of the 11 dog bites went to the bone.

A neighbor eventually saw what was happening, went to the house, untangled the chain and released the dog and the girl.

Today, thankfully, the little girl is recovering at home.

The incident could have been much worse.

Man and woman's best friend bites more than 4.7 million people a year, and key experts believe that public education can help prevent these bites.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, the United States Postal Service, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention work together to educate Americans about dog bite prevention.

Most dog bite victims are children and the elderly.

The rate of dog bite-related injuries is highest for children ages 5 to 9 years, and the rate decreases as children age.

Almost two thirds of injuries among children ages four years and younger are to the head or neck region.

Injury rates in children are significantly higher for boys than for girls.

Unfortunately, a dog's bark is not always worse than its bite.

Parents need to know how to safeguard their family against dog bites and what to do if a dog attacks.

When children are attacked by dogs, they are frequently bitten on the face.

Any bite to the face can result in severe lacerations, infection or disability.

The dogs most likely to cause fatal injuries are Rottweilers, German shepherds, pit bulls, Siberian huskies and wolf-dog hybrids. Regardless of breed, dogs younger than 4 months old have the best chance to become socialized and to learn to accept the people around them, said officials of the Humane Society of the United States.

Children are especially vulnerable to serious dog attacks for several reasons:

- They may make loud noise and unpredictable movements that can startle the dog.
- They may hug the dog out of affection, but that gesture can be threatening to the animal.
- They may go too close to the dog's food dish, provoking a defensive reaction.

In an effort to reduce the number of dog attack victims year, experts offer the following tips:

Teach children to:

- Ask permission from a dog's owner before petting the animal.
- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Drop to the ground, curl into a ball and cover their heads and faces with their arms if a dog knocks them over.
- Never disturb a dog that is eating, sleeping or caring for puppies.
- Never tease or play too rough with a dog.
- Never play with a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.

To prevent dog bites:

- Never leave infants or children alone with a dog.
- Follow leash laws.
- Do not play aggressive games with your dog.
- Keep your dog healthy — and unnoticed injury can make a dog aggressive.
- Do not let dogs run loose — a dog is less likely to bite if its owners train it to interact with people and take it to obedience classes.
- Don't leave the dog chained outside for long periods in open areas where people can come into contact with it.
- Spay or neuter your dog so he or she is less likely to bite.
- Socialize your dog so he is comfortable with a variety of people.
- Don't allow your dog to bark, jump or scratch at the door when someone arrives.
- Always supervise children when they play with dogs.
- If a dog threatens you, try to remain calm and motionless until it leaves.

If there is an attack:

- Try to loosen the dog's grip by pushing your arm against its throat.

- Place something between the victim and the dog, such as a jacket or purse.
- Control the bleeding and wash the wound with soap and water. Get medical help immediately to determine the risk of infection for rabies.

Michigan Report

January 24, 2007

STATE MOVING FORWARD ON HEALTH INSURANCE FOR UNINSURED

The Department of Community Health told the Senate Health Policy Committee on Wednesday it is moving forward on plans to provide healthcare to the uninsured. The Granholm administration announced the plan last year and officials say they have been negotiating details for submitting a waiver with the federal government.

Janet Olszewski, director of the department, updated the committee on progress with the Michigan First Health Care plan, which along with promoting healthy lifestyles and advancing health information technology is part of Governor Jennifer Granholm's plan to offer affordable healthcare for about 550,000 persons.

Ms. Olszewski said getting affordable health care to residents could decrease the number of people who use emergency rooms when they become too ill because they don't have insurance which would reduce overall costs for consumers.

The persons targeted by the plan are in households with up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level and who are uninsured. Under the plan individuals could receive emergency room care, hospital and mental health care, prescription drugs and preventative and primary care. Different plans could offer different coverage, Ms. Olszewski said. The plan is also aimed at small businesses that want to provide some health care for employees.

The department anticipates the monthly premium would be below \$200 per individual and those below 100 percent of the poverty level would be responsible for co-pays and those between 100 and 200 percent of the poverty level would make premium payments and co-payments.

Consumers and businesses would work with an "exchange" to help pick plans that would be combined with efforts to get consumers into healthy behaviors. Enrollees might have to complete health risk appraisals after enrolling and the plan might also waive co-payments for drugs for chronic diseases that help maintain health.

Funding for the plan would come from an amendment to the Adult Benefit Waiver and would be money the state is otherwise spending on health care for the uninsured. They are hoping and expecting the federal government to also help fund the plan.

"We're refining the design, but you're not looking at a big government program," Ms. Olszewski said. "It's public and private partnerships that promote the culture of the use of health insurance."

Ms. Olszewski and others who've worked on the plan have spent the time since first introducing the plan to a joint meeting of the Senate Health Policy Committee and the Appropriations Community Health Subcommittee in February of last year talking to

stakeholder such as hospitals, doctors and consumers. The department is currently in talks with the federal government to receive the matching funds.

Some senators challenged how the plan would handle people who don't think they need to buy health care and then get sick and require emergency medical treatment.

Ms. Olszewski said although there was nothing to stop that from happening, they will advertise the plan and said they've heard from people that there's a need for low cost health insurance.

Sen. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton) said he hoped it wasn't an instance of "government creep" and disliked the idea of covering medical issues that could have been prevented by individual choices.

"When does it become the responsibility of the individual to take care of themselves," Mr. Patterson said.

Ms. Olszewski said by giving people access to doctors and preventing treatment, they could prevent even more expensive care in the long term.

"We need to focus on early coverage instead of extensive back end coverage," Ms. Olszewski said.

Sen. Tom George (R-Kalamazoo) questioned whether the state would be able to pay for the insurance, and added that even if all 550,000 enrolled and paid a \$200 monthly premium, it might not be enough.

"Is it realistic to think a program of this scope can be undertaken without a huge investment from the state?" Mr. Allen asked.

Ms. Olszewski and Paul Reinhart of the department said they are committed to only spending what the Legislature appropriates for them.

The plan would require legislation to implement and Sen. Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit) urged the Republican members of the committee to help by persuading the federal government to approve the program.

Ms. Olszewski said discussions with the federal government were positive, but was unsure if they would meet the administration's proposed deadline of April of this year to have the plan in place.

GRANHOLM ON BUSH PROPOSAL: Governor Jennifer Granholm said Wednesday she is encouraged by President George W. Bush's proposal to provide federal funds to state's that offer health care coverage to uninsured residents. But she was not yet ready to jump in with a plan to collect some of those funds.

Mr. Bush, in his State of the Union Address on Tuesday, said that states providing health care to residents should be receiving federal funding to assist them with that. Massachusetts and California are both implementing such plans.

But Mr. Bush did not provide details on how much federal funding would be available or what states would have to do to qualify.

“Expanding access to affordable healthcare is a prior for the governor and we’re glad the president focused on it but we need to study the proposal more,” said Granholm spokesperson Heidi Watson.

MI First Waiver Still In Limbo

MIRS, January 23, 2007

The federal waiver that would allow the governor to go ahead with her plan to give Michigan's uninsured population health insurance remains in limbo, the administration told a Senate committee today.

The governor needs the waiver to get OK'd for the funding mechanism that would support her Michigan First Healthcare plan. Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** introduced her plan during last year's State of the State address.

Her idea is to develop a partnership between the state and private insurance agencies to provide affordable health care (roughly a month premium of less than \$200) to 550,000 of Michigan's uninsured adults who are at or under 200 percent poverty level.

Uninsured adults over the 200 percent federal poverty level (roughly 550,000 based on the administration's figures) would be allowed to get into an insurance pool to reduce their insurance costs. This part of the plan would not include any state funding.

However, in order for the plan to get moving, the federal government needs to approve an amendment to the Adult Benefit waiver because without it, the state will not have an sufficient funding source.

In August, the Department of Community Health (DCH) told *MIRS* it still hadn't filed a waiver request with the federal government. According to the federal Medicaid Web site, the waiver still hasn't been filed.

Even though the state needs to get the federal waiver to start the program, which Granholm wanted started by April 2007, DCH Director Janet **OLSZEWSKI** told the Senate Health Policy Committee today that she's optimistic things will get moving by the April deadline.

"April is a possibility for us to get started," Olszewski said. "I can't say we'll be enrolling people then."

The status of the waiver depends on the federal government and negotiations, but Olszewski said the Department has spoken with the key players and the negotiations are ongoing.

The DCH has told *MIRS* before that it's taken some states up to two years to get a similar waiver. DCH Spokesman TJ **BUCHOLZ** said that's true, but those states paved the way, which might speed up the process for Michigan.

After all, Michigan's only been working on getting the waiver for seven to eight months, Bucholz said.

Interestingly, DCH officials used the 1.1 million figure for the estimated number of uninsured person in Michigan. The administration's own study estimated the number of uninsured in the state at 800,000 (See "[Michigan's Uninsured ... 1.1M, 800K or 200K?](#)" 01/23/07).



Bush's health insurance plan could hurt UAW

January 25, 2007

BY JOE GUY COLLIER

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

The president's proposal for making basic health insurance available to more people could face tough opposition as it seeks to tax workers -- such as UAW members -- who have so-called generous benefits.

In his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush outlined a plan promoted as a way to make health insurance affordable for more U.S. workers.

It would treat employer-provided health insurance as taxable income. For those with health insurance, it would make tax-exempt the first \$15,000 for families and \$7,500 for individuals.

Bush pitched the plan as a way to help people pay for their health insurance and encourage those without insurance to get coverage.

The drawback is that people with generous benefits will foot the bill. The plan is being proposed for a 2009 start date.

"The short answer is it's positive if you're paying for health insurance out of pocket," said Michael Tanner, director of health and welfare studies for the Cato Institute, a Washington-based policy research organization. "The group that does not benefit would be those whose companies have very robust health care plans."

The deal has particular importance in Michigan because unions, such as the UAW, traditionally have negotiated generous health plans.

Brian Pannebecker, a Ford Motor Co. UAW worker from Shelby Township, said he needs to see more details before he can support or reject the plan, but he's wary of adding a new tax for health benefits.

Pannebecker, who is 47 and married with two children, was provided with \$10,610 in annual health benefits by Ford, according to his most recent statement.

If health insurance premiums continue to rise and reach or exceed the exemption, autoworkers likely would resist the move, Pannebecker said.

"Like a lot of things, the devil is in the details," he said. "Right now, the sentiment around Detroit is that people are trying to hang on to what they've got."

The UAW did not provide a public comment but the AFL-CIO criticized the plan for encouraging companies to push health costs onto workers. It also would not help the uninsured because many people without insurance do not earn enough money to benefit from a tax break, the union said.

"President Bush is touring the nation, touting a health care proposal that only pretends to address our nation's health care crisis, and actually would make it worse," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said in a statement.

More specifics will need to be outlined, but the plan would make the cost of health insurance more transparent to employees, said Ed Murphy, consulting manager for employee benefits at Southfield-based Plante & Moran.

Many businesses support this movement as a way to help contain health care costs for employers, Murphy said.

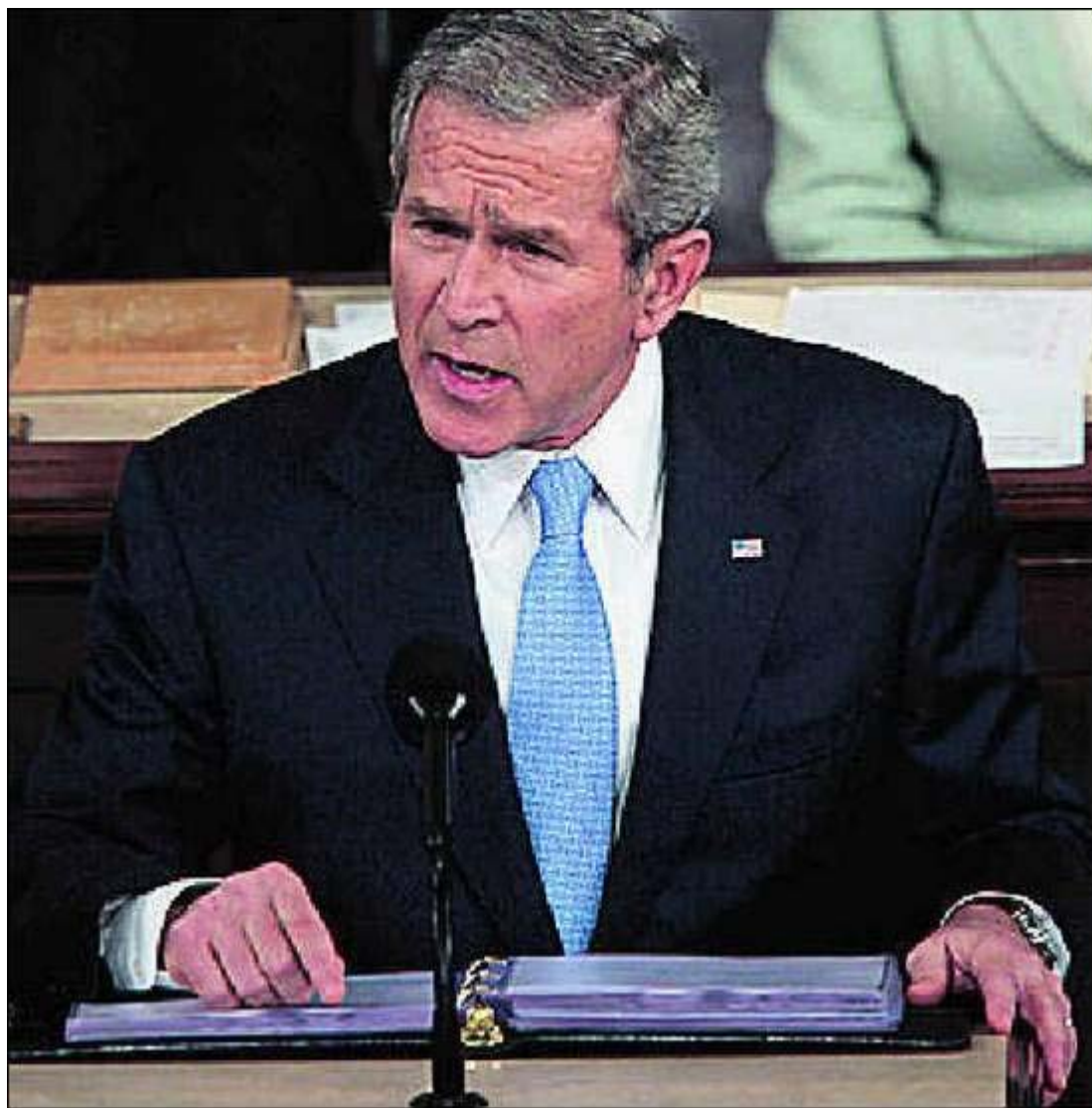
"Clearly, it begins to address the issue: that we need to involve the consumer in the health care-purchasing equation," he said.

Bush's plan, however, will have a tough time being enacted, said Tanner of the Cato Institute, which supports the proposal.

The plan means higher taxes for two powerful groups often at odds with each other: Workers for some unions and executives for Fortune 500 companies.

"Whether or not a weakened president has the clout to push it through remains to be seen," Tanner said.

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Bush health plan could induce pain in Michigan

Thursday, January 25, 2007

By Sarah Kellogg

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- President Bush's new health insurance proposal could help millions of Americans underwrite the cost of their health plans, but it also could eat into the pocketbooks of some middle-class families with employer-paid insurance.

With most people in Michigan covered by employer-paid health plans -- some fairly generous as a result of union negotiations with automobile companies and public employers -- Michigan taxpayers could be hit harder than most if the proposal is signed into law. About 60 percent of individuals in Michigan have employer-paid plans, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

"Because of union health insurance benefits, there are probably a good chunk of folks in Michigan who are going to be over the \$15,000 family threshold," said Peter Pratt, a health care analyst at Public Sector Consultants, a public policy group in Lansing.

The Bush administration estimates that at least 20 percent of workers with employer-paid health plans would pay additional taxes under the proposal. Any health expenses paid by employers beyond \$7,500 for individuals and \$15,000 for families in a single year would be taxed. Nationally the average family premium for employer coverage was \$11,480 in 2006.

"The rhetoric from the administration is that it would tax CEO-type health insurance benefits," said Alan Reuther, the Washington lobbyist for the UAW. "The fact is they admit that 20 percent to 30 percent of folks would get taxed, which indicates to me it's not limited to CEOs. It would be a tax increase on a significant number of working families."

Bush unveiled his plan during his annual State of the Union address Tuesday. Democratic lawmakers said it likely won't get much traction in Congress due to objections from unions, some business leaders and health care advocates.

Nationally an estimated 34 million people -- some 1.2 million in Michigan -- could pay more taxes under the proposal. Exactly how much more wasn't immediately clear.

Bush's proposed tax increase would offset the cost of providing tax breaks for the 12 million people nationally, including about 400,000 in Michigan, who buy their own health insurance. The Commonwealth Fund, a national policy group, said taxes would be reduced \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families. The Bush administration estimates average annual family tax savings of more than \$3,650.

"Currently the tax code fails to assist individuals unless they spend in excess of 7.5 percent of their adjusted gross income on health care," Karen Ignagni, chief executive officer of America's Health Insurance Plans, said in a written statement. "Enacting common-sense tax incentives for individuals will go a long way toward helping millions secure and maintain the coverage they need."

There are 47 million people nationally and 1.1 million in Michigan without health insurance.

Bush said he also wants to provide financial assistance to governors looking to cover the uninsured. His proposal would reduce payments to hospitals that serve large numbers of Medicare and Medicaid patients and shift those dollars to the states. The federal government spent some \$9 billion on these special payments last year.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's \$1 billion Michigan First Health Care Plan would target some 550,000 uninsured adults who make less than 200 percent of poverty, or about \$19,600 for an individual and \$40,000 for a family of four.

Under her proposal, private managed-care insurance plans would be offered through an "Exchange"

administered by the state. People purchasing insurance through the plan would pay premiums based on their income.

Those at the highest income levels covered by the plan (200 percent of poverty) likely would pay no more than about 5 percent of their annual income, or \$82 monthly for an individual and \$167 monthly for a family of four.

State officials have been working for nearly a year to win federal approval for the plan. Michigan Medicaid Director Paul Reinhart will meet with federal officials again this week.

Granholm had hoped to launch the program in April, but it is unclear when federal approval might come down.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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January 25, 2007

President's health plan helps heal broken system

The Detroit News

President George W. Bush's proposal to use tax breaks to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance has viable elements that could help solve one of the nation's most pressing concerns.

Under the Bush plan, the market for health insurance would be expanded and made more competitive and likely available to more Americans. The president would achieve this in part by giving a standard tax break for health insurance to individuals and families, a shift from the corporate tax breaks that are given now.

The plan encourages people to not only take stock of their health insurance coverage, but to take control of it and make informed choices about the coverage they need. What many will find is that they're paying for services they don't need or want and given the option, would seek better -- and cheaper -- plans.

While the president's proposal isn't perfect, it's preferable to a nationalized system that would make delivery of services worse and increase costs. At the least, it should foster rigorous debate about improving our market-based health care system that, despite its flaws, still is the best in the world.

Under the president's plan, those who buy their own health care coverage would get a tax deduction of \$7,500 for individuals (\$15,000 for families). The deduction benefits the 17 million in America who pay for their own health insurance. It also will result in lower taxes for 80 percent of employer-provided policies, the White House estimates.

Those who have "gold-plated" benefits worth more than the standard deductions would have to pay taxes on the value above the limits. Some workers who have expensive policies run the risk of paying higher taxes, though with competition and awareness of better programs they could adjust their policies and reduce their tax liability. This is a significant issue for Michigan's union workers, who have among the best health insurance policies in America, but mostly have no concept of how much their coverage costs.

Asking workers to pay attention to health care costs is a legitimate expectation. And it will likely make many realize that they're being overcharged. When given the option of arranging the benefit themselves and finding that they can get coverage more cheaply, yet still get the tax deduction, many will choose to do so.

Individuals who previously were limited to expensive plans because they didn't qualify for discounts given to group policies will have more options through provisions to make forming insurance pools easier.

Jack McHugh, an analyst with the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland, says this group of individual policy holders is increasing.

"The number of self-employed people as a percentage of the overall work force has been growing steadily and will continue to do so. This is particularly important in a state whose major employers are downsizing," he says.

Democrats in Congress don't like the proposal because of its potential to penalize union workers. But it gives individuals choices and shifts responsibility from the employer to the employee, and in the long run that will mean more security for workers.

There are issues still to address. But the president's plan provides a solid framework from which to work. This is the best start we've seen for addressing America's health care crisis, and it deserves fair consideration from Congress.

Bush health plan by the numbers

\$13,500: Projected average premium for families in 2009.

75 to 80: Percent of employer premium contributions that will come in under the deduction amount in President Bush's health care plan.

5 million: The number of uninsured who will gain coverage under the plan, mostly from the middle class.

Source: Bush administration

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January 25, 2007

With Health Care Topic A, Some Sketches for a Solution

By **MILT FREUDENHEIM**

Start with the children and work up from there. For corporate America and Washington policy experts, that seems to be the emerging consensus about how to begin tackling the problem of the 47 million people in this country without health insurance: Start with the more than 8 million uninsured children.

Then maybe add four million college students who do not have insurance but might not cost all that much to cover because they tend to be young and healthy.

Next might come the 1.4 million or so uninsured people in households with total income at least \$75,000, who are perhaps in a position to purchase insurance — if insurance became mandatory and if a market for affordable personal policies was created.

Those are among the ideas arising from corporate America as change in the nation's health insurance system seems increasingly to become a political imperative.

Employers, much of the glue holding the nation's piecemeal health care system together for half a century, have been reluctant to agree to a larger government role in medical coverage. But straining under runaway costs for providing health insurance — partly because of the costs imposed on the medical system by people with no insurance at all — many executives and their representatives see the time as ripe for starting to overhaul the system.

"There is more frustration and less acceptance of the current system among employers than we have ever seen in my 30 years in this field," said Helen Darling, president of the National Business Group on Health, an organization made up of large companies.

As a starting point, many employers and health care industry executives are pushing for expansion of the federal-state Children's Health Insurance Program, which covers children from families with incomes too high for Medicaid.

Increasing the funds and expanding eligibility, business leaders say, would be an important start — not only in providing better care for the children, but in reducing the expensive visits to hospital emergency rooms that end up as higher costs for employers who pay for health care for the majority of American workers and their families.

The program, which depends on federal funds with matching grants from states, is up for renewal in Congress this year. The federal contribution is currently \$5 billion a year. With the budget deficit a contentious matter, it will not be easy to enact that or any other new spending measure.

But the head of another representative of large corporations said that not taking action was no longer an option for American companies as they compete with foreign businesses whose governments shouldered medical and hospital costs.

"Health costs are the single largest cost pressure that employers face — far exceeding energy, labor, material, even litigation," said

John J. Castellani, president of the Business Roundtable, an association of 165 of the largest companies.

The national grocery chain [Safeway](#), for example, says the \$1 billion it spent on employee health care last year exceeded its net income. By next year, that will be true for most large businesses, according to Safeway's chairman and chief executive, Steven A. Burd, who cited a McKinsey & Company study.

The November election results sent a message that voters want the government to address personal concerns like access to good health care, Mr. Castellani of the Business Roundtable said.

President Bush proposed his own approach in the State of the Union address on Tuesday night, though some Congressional Democrats are deriding it, saying it has no chance of passage.

But Democrats are pushing for new powers for Medicare to have a role in drug pricing, for example. And California has joined the states that are experimenting with mandatory health insurance for individuals and employers as a way to address the problems of the uninsured.

Mr. Burd, whose company is based in California, has urged his counterparts to support Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#)'s proposal for requiring universal coverage of individuals who can afford it, while providing subsidies for low-income people to purchase policies.

Such requirements would mean creating a market for individual health policies that would resemble the market for car insurance, Mr. Burd said.

[WellPoint](#), the largest health insurer, said it had been signing up about 380,000 previously uninsured people annually by devising new types of lower-price policies.

Jude Thompson, a senior vice president, said the company had made a target of the 18-to-34-year-old group — sometimes called “young invincibles” — attracting them with reduced premiums that are offset by higher annual deductibles of \$1,500, and throwing in vision and dental benefits.

The insurance industry has both short- and long-term reasons for wanting market-based approaches to succeed, said Charles Boorady, a health care analyst at [Citigroup](#). Short term, they get more customers. But in the longer run, “their biggest risk is nationalized health care.”

The government already accounts for 40 percent of total health spending — \$1.99 trillion in 2005, Mr. Boorady said. “The decision on should we nationalize all of it will be heavily influenced by the outcome of some of these state universal health plans,” he said.

Jack O. Bovender, chief executive of [HCA](#), the hospital company, said that a patchwork of state plans would not work. For one thing, he said, state regulation of health care financing had often been overturned by lawsuits filed under the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act, which the courts have said was intended to let big companies set up uniform health benefits across the country, rather than navigate state-by-state requirements.

“Ultimately there has to be a federal solution,” Mr. Bovender said. But he cautioned, “I think we need to move quickly but not grab at what appear to be quick easy fixes; things that sound good always have unintended consequences.”

Some business executives said they were reluctant to prescribe solutions. "We certainly don't have it all figured out," H. Lee Scott, chief executive of [Wal-Mart Stores](#), said in a statement. The company is the nation's largest employer.

"We have said all along that it is going to take businesses working with leaders in government, the health care industry and others to come up with health care solutions," Mr. Scott added.

Charles N. Kahn III, a longtime strategist in the Washington health policy wars, said that the chances for government action were now unusually bright.

But even with a growing political will to tackle the problem, Mr. Kahn, who is president of the Federation of American Hospitals, is not expecting the complicated problems in the health care system to be solved quickly. He cautioned that federal budget deficits made it "hard to visualize major health reform before the 2008 elections."

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Child Support Division Recovers \$35M

MIRS, January 23, 2007

Today, Attorney General Mike **COX** announced year-end collection figures for his Child Support Division. He said that in 2006, the division collected more than \$13.2 million in unpaid child support. Since the division was created in 2003 it has collected \$35.2 million and has directly delivered child support payments to more than 3,500 children.

"When I pledged to form this unit, I vowed to collect \$25 million on behalf of

Michigan's children in my first term," said Cox. "Today, I am pleased to announce that my Child Support Division surpassed that goal by more than \$10 million and recovered a record amount of child support for thousands of Michigan children."

The View

Stalking: Living in fear

'Nothing romantic about being stalked'

By Sandi Kasha
, Heritage Newspapers

Barbara Niess knows what it's like for someone to feel helpless and in need of a safe place to stay.

As executive director of Ann Arbor's SafeHouse Center, Niess meets countless men and women who seek solace from domestic violence and other types of domestic trouble.

One issue that compromises a person's safety is stalking. And with January proclaimed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm as Stalking Awareness Month for the state of Michigan, Niess hopes the public will educate itself about the dangers of stalking.

"Stalking is something that needs to be taken seriously," she said. "Our society seems to make it OK with the media glamorizing the act."

Niess was disturbed with a TV show in which a victim started to date her stalker because she was flattered by his attention. In reality, stalking isn't flattering, she said.

Stalking became a crime in Michigan in 1993. It's legally defined by the state as "a willful course of conduct involving repeated or continuing harassment of another individual that would cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened and harassed."

According to the Michigan State Police, there were roughly 27,000 reported incidents of stalking in the state in 2005.

"There's nothing romantic about being stalked," Niess said. "I remember being in high school and many girls thinking it was cool for their boyfriends to be jealous and call them incessantly. It's not normal, it's not romantic, it's not considerate and it's not OK."

Self Protection

An estimated 76 percent of women who were murdered and 85 percent of those attacked were stalked the year before the crime, according to the Michigan Department of Human Services.

"It's a crime that's very dangerous and risky," said Joyce Wright, a training coordinator for the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board.

Wright said the experience of being stalked can be traumatic for the victim.

"The victim has to have a huge lifestyle adjustment by changing their schedule, driving routes and so forth," she said. "People are oftentimes harassed by the stalker with countless phone calls, unwanted gifts and letters.

"Then it may all escalate into threatening messages and it could escalate into death."

There are measures people can take to protect themselves, Wright said.

"Notifying the police and getting a restraining order is the first step," she said. "It can be hard for a victim to open up and talk about their stalker since they just want to put the terrible

ordeal behind them."

But there are outlets other than the courts where victims can turn to for help.

"Along with reporting the incidents to law enforcement, victims also can contact their local domestic or sexual violence program for advocacy, counseling and, if necessary, shelter services," said Marianne Udow, director of the Department of Human Services.

For decades, SafeHouse has been a place for victims in Washtenaw County to turn to in time of need.

"We provide a safe haven for those who come through our doors," Neiss said. "It's a shelter for those who desperately need it. Sometimes victims can't talk to the police and we're here to help them take the next step and get acquainted with the law."

Niess said victims can seek shelter at SafeHouse for 35 days or more.

"It depends on their circumstance and we are willing to have them stay longer," she said. "Their safety is our top priority."

Being Stalked

Stalking is not something that's welcomed or asked for, said David Garvin, a social worker for Ann Arbor's Catholic Social Services.

"The victim isn't in control of the situation," he said. "It's a devastating crime that forces the victim to drastically change his or her lifestyle in order to be safe."

"Stalking doesn't happen overnight and doesn't consist of a single incident, it's a continuous process."

Wright said that it's difficult for many victims to discuss their stalking ordeal.

"They've been put through the emotional wringer and want to put it behind them," she said. "Talking about it doesn't make it any better."

Niess agrees.

"Stalking is like assault, but more of a mental assault," she said. "The stalker is running the show and the victim is helpless in trying to control the situation."

Niess said that the stalking cases she's come across usually deal with intimate relationships gone wrong.

"The scenario is a person ends a relationship and that person they dumped won't go away and accept that the relationship is over," Niess said. "Or many times the victim thinks they have the situation under control and don't take it seriously until it escalates into something serious."

Niess believes that most women have a lower expectation for safety than men.

"When you think something's not right, it probably isn't," Niess said. "Women usually underestimate their gut."

Stalker Profile

Garvin said that there isn't a particular psychological profile for a stalker and that it's hard to pinpoint the psychological makeup of a stalker.

"Stalkers vary and the reasons they stalk someone vary," he said. "Most stalkers see their victims as theirs to control. They believe they are entitled and they belong to them. Stalkers

don't feel like they're doing anything wrong."

Garvin, who's been working with perpetrators of domestic violence for 21 years, said stalkers are usually known to their victims.

"And not all stalking is defined by incessant behavior like calling too much," he said.

Some stalking can be so subtle that the victim may not be aware that somebody is watching.

"Victims should know that there is an outlet for them and that they can be safe," Niess said.

"There are options and nobody should be a victim."

Staff Writer Sandi Kasha can be reached at 475-1371 or skasha@heritage.com.

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Volunteers set out to count homeless

Efforts in 3 counties to help agencies

January 25, 2007

BY KORIE WILKINS

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Shivering in two coats and a hat, Thomas Hill waited to enter the South Oakland Warming Center in Royal Oak, snow dusting his coat and mustache.

It's the first time he's been homeless. His seasonal job installing sprinkler systems ended, and he lost his place at a relative's home in Madison Heights. But Hill, who has slept at the shelter for the past few weeks since becoming homeless in December, isn't alone. He said the shelter is crowded every night.

"There are plenty of homeless around here," said Hill, 53.

In an effort to change that, an army of 250 volunteers hit Oakland County streets Wednesday night to count homeless people. Similar counts were expected to kick off in Macomb and Wayne counties today as part of a nationwide effort, said Monica Duncan, executive director of the South Oakland Shelter in Royal Oak. Volunteers will ask the people why they are homeless, whether they are sick and how long they've been on the streets.

"We're getting the information straight from the source," Duncan said.

Required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the count -- done every two years -- determines how much money is funneled to various agencies that help homeless people. Kirsten Elliott, vice president of development for the Community Housing Network in Troy, said volunteers would fan out across the county, searching for people on major thoroughfares and in abandoned homes and buildings.

Homeless people will also be counted in shelters.

During the last count, 1,293 homeless people were found in Oakland County. The county received \$3.2 million in HUD money. Two years ago, 947 homeless people were counted in Macomb County.

In Wayne County, the count two years ago tallied 1,338 people who are repeatedly on the streets or who never leave. That translated to about \$20 million for agencies that help homeless people.

Contact **KORIE WILKINS** at 248-351-5186 or kwilkins@freepress.com.

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[From Lansing State Journal]

Schneider: New home may rescue family of 8 from hotel

The Baldwin clan remains camped out in two rooms at the AmeriHost Inn & Suites in Dimondale, but the end may be in sight.

This week, Tammy and Terry Baldwin put an offer on a five-bedroom mobile home.

They also have a spot picked out for it at Eaton Pine Village in Eaton Rapids.

The Baldwins, along with their six children and two grandchildren, were burned out of their Charlotte home Jan. 12. Ideally, they could be in their new home in two to four weeks, which is not a moment too soon.

"There's nowhere to turn around in here," Tammy said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, a fund set up for the Baldwins at the Lansing Automakers Credit Union continues to swell with community goodwill. As of Wednesday, donors had contributed nearly \$7,000, including two \$1,000 gifts.

Not to mention all the gift cards, clothing, food and other items that have poured in for the Baldwins since we told their story one week ago.

"The support has been overwhelming," Tammy said.

Crowd control

The Baldwins have eight adopted children - all of whom have disabilities, from attention-deficit disorder to cerebral palsy. The two oldest kids are on their own, but the Baldwins have custody of two grandchildren, bringing the total at home back to eight.

Thanks to EATRAN and Dean Transportation Services, the kids are back in school.

A buffet benefit will take place at 4 p.m. Saturday at Rocky's Roadhouse,

2470 Cedar St., Holt. The cost is \$7.

Project Christmas 2006 a success

Gladwin County Record

To the Editor:

Project Christmas 2006 was another great success, thanks to the annual efforts of the many donors and volunteers, who brought Christmas joy to 738 Gladwin County children.

Our community can be very grateful for the individuals, churches, businesses, clubs, and schools that take time to help the needy of our County. The many gifts of time, money, knitted/crocheted items, clothing and toys enabled all of the children registered to receive several items each. Needy families and children were identified beginning in September and in the weeks and days leading up to Christmas. Schools and community agencies made referrals, in addition to Department of Human Services mailings. There was much cooperation between everyone involved.

Beaverton and Gladwin schools both had a variety of student groups participate in fund raisers, food, and toy drives this year, with the kids deciding where to donate. The youth of Gladwin County were definitely involved, and their volunteerism and spirit was appreciated. A special thanks this year to GLADYAC , Gladwin County Youth Action Council, composed of Beaverton and Gladwin youth, for their "Winter Wear Drive." We received many coats and other cold weather gear through this drive.

Churches, businesses, and organizations requested a total of 403 children's names this year, which were then distributed throughout Gladwin County (and 150 in Bay County) by various methods, including tags on "Caring Trees." Participants were Mid Michigan Community College, Chemical Bank-Beaverton, St Anne Church-Edenville, Holy Trinity Church-Bay City, Sacred Heart Church, Oasis Salon, Burkhart-Presidio Insurance, Pamida, Riverwalk Place, and Beaverton City Hall. Toys and clothing was then purchased by the community, returned to the Caring Trees, and then delivered to the Gladwin County Dept of Human Services for distribution to the children's families.

Another 76 families, totaling 164 children, were "adopted" by various individuals, clubs, churches, and student groups. These gifts were then delivered directly between the parties involved.

In addition to gift donations, several service clubs, such as the Beaverton Lions, the Gladwin Goodfellows, and the Albright Shores Eagles provided many families and seniors with large food baskets. The Willing Workers again assisted many

families from the Clement Township area. The Big Boys Club from the Wooden Shoe donated many items of new bedding and also helped with set-up.

The Rose Anderson Memorial Christmas Distribution was held on Dec. 16, 2006 at the Gladwin Knights of Columbus Hall. The Knights have graciously donated the use of the hall for the past sixteen years. Set-up started on Dec. 13, with volunteers helping to truck items from storage and arranging on tables. For the fourth year, the community was invited to bring used clothing and toys directly to the hall during our set-up days and the response was great! We had an abundance of clothing and coats, used toys, stuffed animals, books, small appliances, and knick-knacks that people could freely take after they had received their children's new gifts. We also gave away free jersey gloves to adults and socks and underwear to children. Each family was also allowed to choose a hat and mitten set for each of their kids. Thank you to many of our area churches for donating the socks and underwear for several hundred kids!

Toy requests that were still unfilled by Dec. 16 were filled from the several truckloads of toys from our local Toys For Kids program, headed by Fran Seebeck. Hats off to Fran, her family and staff, for their unselfish work on this annual project. And thank you to the area businesses that allow Toys for Kids to collect toys at their locations. Several monetary donations were also received this year, which were used to fill unmet needs, especially for teenagers.

By the time Christmas arrived, 341 families with 738 children had received gifts. That is 24 more families and 10 more kids than last year. This is a tribute to everyone who helped make it happen! The list of all who volunteered and/or donated is very long and we apologize we can't list everyone individually, but we thank each of you who brightened the holidays for so many. Thanks!

Dan Sheehan

DHS Community

Resource Coordinator



Basket program successful

Wednesday, January 24, 2007 10:38 AM EST

To the editor,

The Allegan Christmas Basket Program in cooperation with the Allegan County Department of Human Services assisted over 287 families this past Christmas. We would like to thank everyone who was involved in helping the neediest families in our community. This includes the many individuals, businesses, churches and schools who generously offered to sponsor families and provide them with gifts and food. Your caring and assistance helped to brighten the holidays for many families.

On Dec. 16, our Christmas distribution was held for those families who were not sponsored. A special thank you to the Allegan First Baptist Church for donating their beautiful facility for our distribution site and for contributing gas cards, food and additional volunteers. Thank you to the Allegan County Area Technical and Education Center who put up an angel tree, purchased and wrapped gifts and sponsored families. The Allegan County Courthouse also contributed by placing an angel tree in their lobby and providing gifts for families. The residents at Grand Ravine Senior Housing donated their time to wrap many of these gifts. We are very grateful for their help.

The project was a large undertaking and certainly was a community effort. With the assistance of Allegan County Crisis Response, we were able to purchase much of our food from the Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank. In order to make our Christmas boxes look festive for the families, the folks at Allegan County Community Mental Health spent hours wrapping them. In addition, Immanuel Lutheran Church donated handmade blankets, Hungry for Christ in Hamilton contributed a huge amount of food, United Way donated many toy trucks and Life Pyramid coordinated the donation of many new and used clothes.

We are very appreciative of the efforts of all who were involved in transporting the goods to our site. Many volunteers donated their trucks and physical energy to load/unload the many items that were given to our families at the distribution.

It was a tremendous effort and we could not have accomplished it without the generosity of our community and the help of all who volunteered their time.

Kathy Kibby, Site Coordinator, City of Allegan

Jan Keel, Community Resource Coordinator, Allegan Co. Dept. of Human Services



Groups tout earned income tax credit

Thursday, January 25, 2007

MARY L. LAWRENCE

THE SAGINAW NEWS

The Saginaw Financial Awareness Coalition and United Way of Saginaw County want to boost people's tax returns as much as possible by promoting the earned income tax credit.

A "Super Saturday" information and income tax preparation session will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Buena Vista Community Center, 1940 S. Outer Drive, to kick off the tax preparation season.

Organizers hope the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance effort will help return an estimated \$1 million in tax credits to the county's economy.

Heads of households with low wages may qualify.

In 2006, the tax assistance plan helped to return \$972,000 in credits to Saginaw County taxpayers. Many recipients didn't realize they qualified, said Marsha Cooley, volunteer services coordinator for the United Way.

Organizers also will offer information on finances, housing, how to start a small business, senior services, home health services and other community projects. Activities include a raffle and refreshments.

"We encourage the general public to attend, even if they do not want their taxes prepared," Cooley said.

Free tax preparation is available at several sites around Saginaw County during the tax season, including:

t Butman-Fish Library, 1716 Hancock in Saginaw -- 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays, and 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays, beginning Monday.

t Town and Country Family Credit Union, 2796 Erna in Saginaw Township -- 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, beginning Wednesday.

t National City Bank, 1140 S. Outer Drive in Buena Vista Township -- 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, beginning Thursday, Feb. 1.

t Frankenmuth Credit Union, 580 N. Main in Frankenmuth -- 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, Feb. 3 and Feb. 17, March 3, March 10 and April 7.

For more information on free tax preparation, call Cooley at 755-0433, ext. 203. v

Mary L. Lawrence is a staff writer. You may reach her at 776-9676.

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SFA Readies Budget Whack List

MIRS, January 23, 2007

The head of the Senate Fiscal Agency (SFA) today told the members of the Senate Appropriations Committee they'll be receiving a list of possible General Fund budget cuts that could be undertaken to resolve just shy of a \$1 billion hole in the current state budget.

"We're delivering a comprehensive memo to reduce spending by department," said Gary **OLSON**, director of the SFA.

The document isn't a list of recommendations, just merely different options that lawmakers could use in resolving the state's current fiscal year deficit. The document examines various options, including what a 10 percent reduction in General Fund appropriations to the departments would look like.

He noted during his remarks to Senators that the document will display the type of layoffs that would have to occur in certain state departments with expenditures that are predominantly personnel based.

"It will be very critical to resolve these deficits as quickly as possible," Olson told the Appropriations panel, noting that the further into the fiscal year the state gets, the harder it will be to make the cuts.

Much like the presentation that House Fiscal Agency (HFA) Director Mitch **BEAN** gave to members of the House, Olson noted that on the state's General Fund side there are four major areas that account for almost 90 percent of state spending — the budgets from the Department of Human Services, Department of Community Health, Department of Corrections and higher education.

"It will be difficult to balance the budget without looking at them," Olson added.

During questioning, Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Ron **JELINEK** (R-Three Oaks) clarified that if the state doesn't deal with the deficit, it just carries forward.

Olson admitted that was true, but there were some serious consequences of just letting it slide.

"There are very, very significant cash flow issues," Olson said. "You could run into a situation at the end of the fiscal year where you can't pay the bills that are due."

He also warned that assuredly, such a move would result in credit agencies further downgrading the state's bond rating. Again, costing more money in the long run.

Olson was also questioned at length about last year's overspending that occurred by the Departments of Human Services; Corrections and State Police.

"\$69.1 million in overspending, that's a huge sum of money," said Senate Majority Floor Leader Alan **CROPSEY** (R-DeWitt), who questioned when that overspending became apparent.

"We didn't receive any notification until just before Thanksgiving," said Olson.

Cropsey then noted there were 37 days between the end of the fiscal year and the election and he questioned Olson as to whether there was political motivation in delaying notification of the House and Senate of the overspending.

"I think it'd be more appropriate to ask the Budget Director that question," Olson said.

The SFA chief did tell Cropsey and the panel there are really two types of over-expenditure. The first is when an agency just spends beyond its appropriation. The other is when a caseload rises unexpectedly,

resulting in an over spending. The first was more offensive than the latter.

In this case, the Departments of State Police and Corrections merely overspent their legislatively approved allotment.

"It shouldn't have happened," Olson said.

When pressed about a possible remedy, Olson said he didn't know.

"I don't know what the remedy for violating the Constitution is," Olson said. "All I know is you're not supposed to do it."

Michigan Report

January 24, 2007

POTENTIAL D.H.S. CUTS: Cutting funding to some areas of the budget isn't as easy as getting out the red ink. For example, a recent Senate Fiscal Agency report found many programs funded under the Department of Human Services Budget require a steady level of state funding or the federal government could axe its contributions.

The annual [analysis](#) notes that the state must maintain expenditures at 75 percent of the historically spent dollars for low-income programs that fall under federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) grants.

Examples of these programs are the state's cash assistance program, employment and training services and child care dollars.

Maureen Sorbet, spokesperson for DHS, said she's yet to hear which if any cuts to the department will be considered and can't venture a guess as to their impact until the budget is finalized.

If lawmakers do slash the budget for these programs below the 75 percent level, the federal government could sanction the state in a number of ways including by reducing TANF funding by the amount the state falls short, requiring the state to meet an 80 percent funding level in subsequent years or by taking away federal TANF dollars for specific programs.

Michigan Report

January 24, 2007

SENATE TOLD STATE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT DEP'T SPENDING IN SUMMER

While the state did not officially notify the Legislature until late November that the departments of Human Services, Corrections and State Police had overspent their appropriations, administration officials had told Senate and House fiscal officials they were concerned about the potential spending overruns earlier in the summer.

Senate Fiscal Agency Director Gary Olson told the Senate Appropriations Committee that while the overspending shouldn't have occurred, former Budget Director Mary Lannoye notified him and House Fiscal Agency Director Mitch Bean during the summer that she was concerned about the potential for overspending in those departments.

And asked how the state can avoid such situations in the future, Mr. Olson said better communication is needed between the departments and fiscal officials on spending issues.

He also said that the accounting system the state uses needs to be more robust to better track potential spending problems.

A memo prepared by the SFA last month showed that in the last 15 years only during 2002-03 did no department overspend its allocation. Mr. Olson said in that memo and again before the committee that the state is doing a better job of tracking expenditures and preventing overspending.

Asked by Senate Majority Floor Leader Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt) if there was anything political in the administration releasing notification of the overspending after the election, Mr. Olson said there was no way he could comment on the question.

Greg Bird, spokesperson for the State Budget Office, denied there was anything political in the timing. While the fiscal year starts on October 1, revenues continue to accrue to the year just past until November. Budget officials were waiting to see if October revenues would cover the potential shortfall in the three departments, he said, before releasing what the final problem was.

Mr. Olson also said that after the Legislature approved supplemental funding for the three departments, Ms. Lannoye – now chief of staff to Governor Jennifer Granholm – said she thought the funding would be enough to meet the departments' needs, though she was still concerned.

The Human Services Subcommittee of the full committee has scheduled a hearing on January 31 with the department to discuss the overspending.